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ANOTHER VIEW

California can't wait on diesel regs

Lois Henry gets it wrong in her March 14 column, "Dodgy science strangles industry," which she uses to criticize the California Air Resources Board's new regulations aimed at reducing emissions from aging, dirty big-rigs and off-road construction equipment.

The State Bus and Truck Regulation, adopted in December after exhaustive research and peer review, and which Ms. Henry would like to "redo," will prevent 9,400 deaths between 2011 and 2025; greatly reduce days of missed work, school and hospitalization; and lower health care costs by billions of dollars. Asthma symptoms, cancer, heart and lung disease will all be affected for the better, once emissions from these one million vehicles are successfully controlled.

The same can be said for CARB's Off Road Regulation, adopted in 2007, which will slash toxic and cancer-causing diesel emissions from the state's estimated 180,000 "off-road" vehicles used in construction, mining, airport ground support and other industries. Over its lifetime, the rule will prevent at least 4,000 premature deaths statewide and avoid \$18 billion to \$26 billion in premature death and health costs.

It is very important to CARB that we scrutinize economic as well as health impacts during the rule development process. As part of that, we meet with the hundreds of business owners and stakeholders impact-

ed, so for almost two years, we went up and down California. As a result, the Truck and Bus regulation was revised more than once to accommodate concerns voiced by the trucking industry.

With regard to the harm that stems from exposure to PM 2.5, there have been several studies produced within just the past few years that support CARB's need to regulate emissions from the nearly 1 million trucks and buses driving California's highways. These include a 2008 report by Cal State Fullerton researchers that found dealing with the health impacts of air pollution, especially diesel emissions, costs the state \$28 billion annually.

If the myriad studies attesting to the harm posed by "tiny bits of soot" are not enough evidence, I encourage you to visit the websites of the American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, Union of Concerned Scientists and countless other respected organizations for further proof that CARB's steps are critical to saving lives. The weight of scientific evidence clearly supports an increased risk of dying before your time if you are exposed to elevated PM 2.5 levels.

Ms. Henry's whole premise for questioning the science behind the diesel regulations is a red herring. Though we do not take lightly the false claim of a PhD in Statistics from UC Davis by one of the writers of the PM 2.5 health report, Ms. Henry greatly overplayed the significance of this misstatement as it relates to the truck regulation.

The individual in question simply pulled

numerous studies together into one document. He did not produce one single piece of new health evidence. More importantly, the report that he helped compile went through four levels of independent, external peer review. Three nationally recognized scientific advisors from Harvard, Brigham Young University and the State's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment assessed all aspects of the work, including all publicly released versions of the report. The UC Berkeley Institute of the Environment selected six formal peer reviewers for the report. We also convened a panel with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the World Health Organization and internationally recognized PM health effects experts. And at the request of the Engine Manufacturers Association, the diesel soot exposure estimates were reviewed by Philip Hopke of Clarkson University. The result? All levels of review agreed with the basic conclusions of the report.

What CARB knows after more than 40 years in business is that diesel exhaust is an insidious and pervasive enemy, responsible for 70 percent of the known cancer risk that comes from air pollution. It can and does kill. To delay enactment of either the Off-Road Heavy Duty Diesel or Statewide Truck and Bus regulation would waste precious time and only cause further pain and suffering to those whose health has already been compromised by diesel air pollution.

Mary D. Nichols is chairwoman of the California Air Resources Board. The Californian reserves the right to reprint Another View commentaries in all formats, including on its web page.



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